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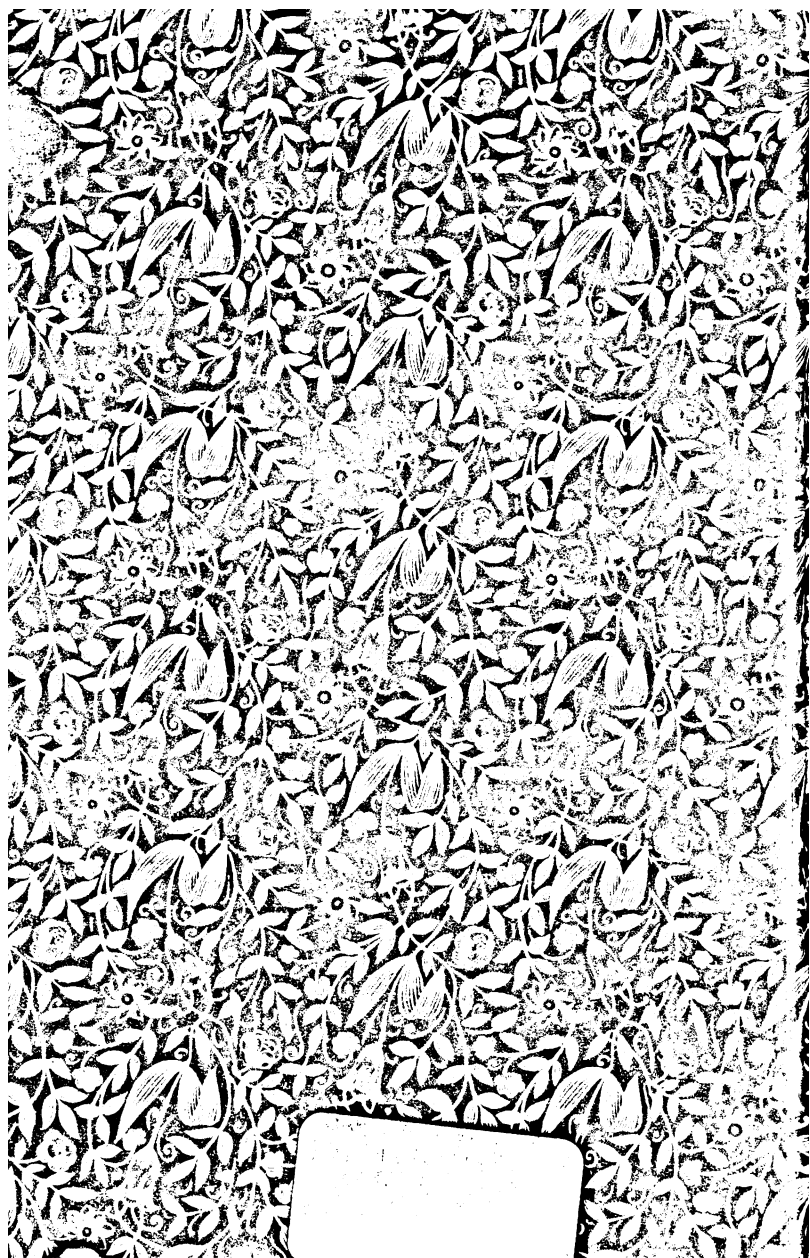
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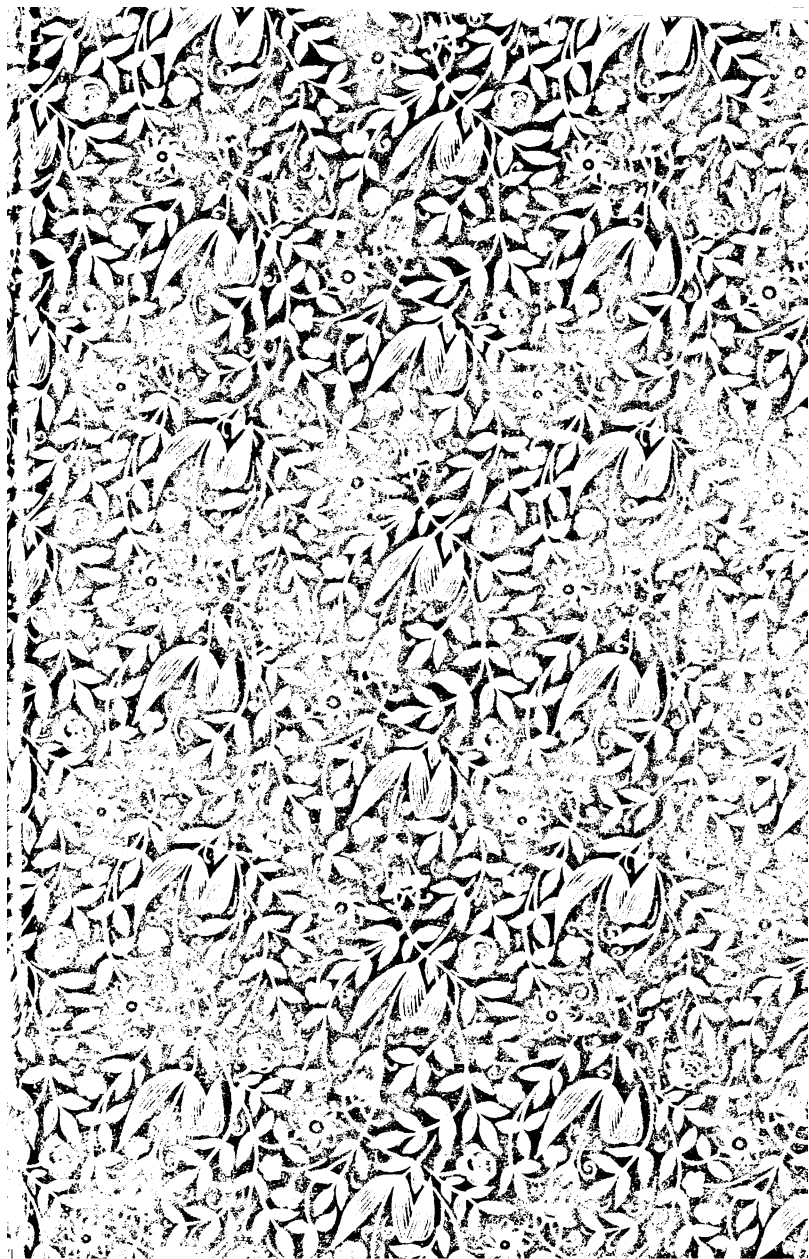
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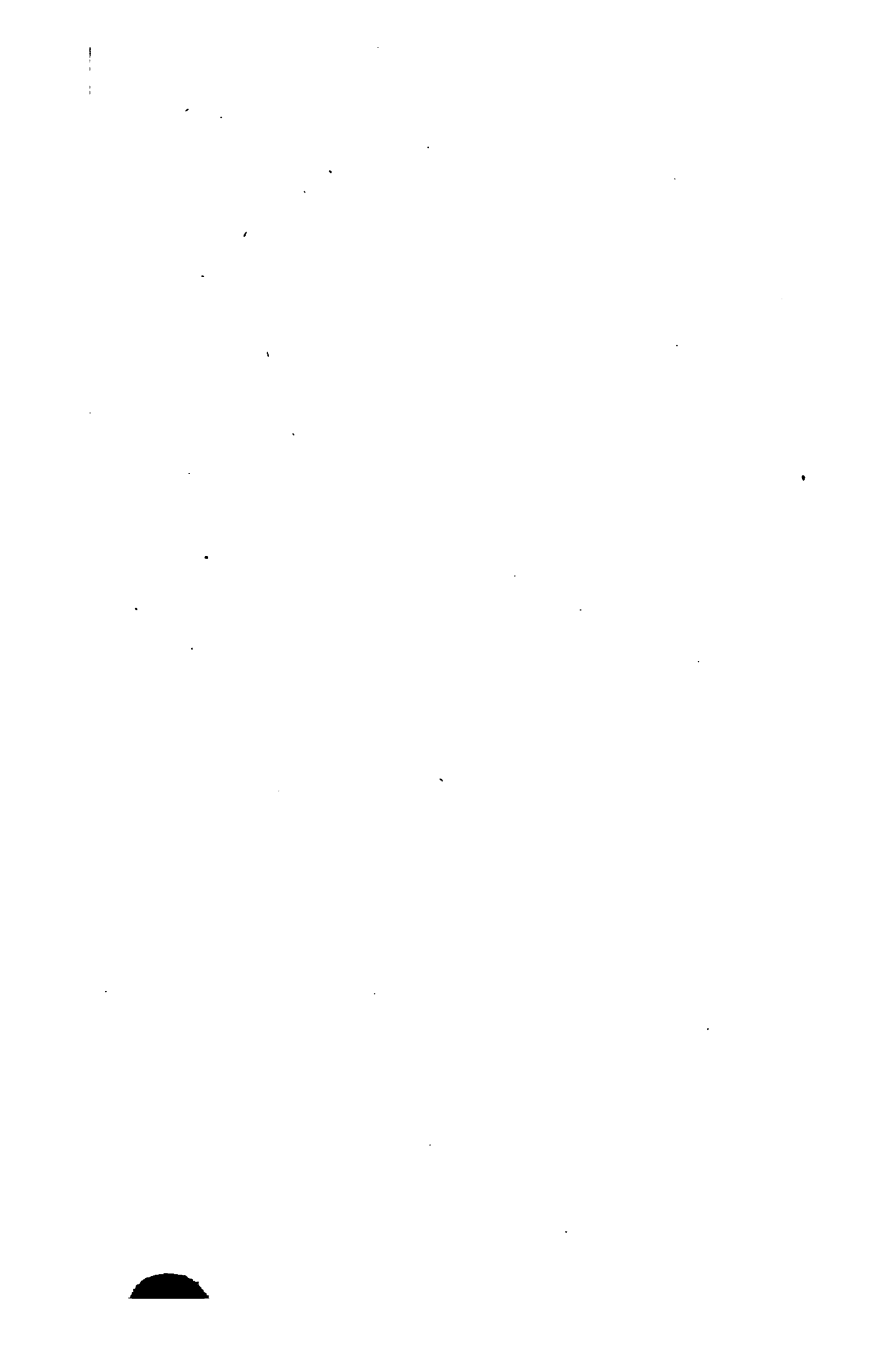
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1. No subject

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# CALIFORNIAN VERSES

BY

CHAS. H. PHELPS.

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M. W. P.

NOT AS A TOKEN OF THAT DEAR REVERENCE WHICH  
AFFECTION CHERISHES AT THE FIRESIDE ; BUT AS A  
TRIBUTE TO THE NOBILITY OF WOMANHOOD.



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## CALIFORNIAN VERSES.

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### THE MAID OF ST. HELENA.

ACROSS the long, vine-covered land  
She gazed, with lifted, shading hand.

Behind were hillsides, purple, brown ;  
Before were vineyards sloping down ;

While northward rose, through golden mist,  
St. Helen's mount of amethyst.

But forest, vine, and mountain hight  
Were less divinely benedight

\*\*\*

Than she who so serenely stood  
To gaze on mountain, vine, and wood.

Her presence breathed in sweet excess  
The fragrance of rare loveliness—

A simple beauty in her face,  
And in her form a simple grace.

She was so perfect and so fair,  
So like a vision, and so rare,

The air that touched her seemed to me  
To thrill with trembling ecstasy.

Spell-bound, for fear she might not stay,  
I stood afar in sweet dismay.

At last, she sang some olden song.  
I did not know its tale of wrong;



I only knew the oriole's note  
Grew garrulous within its throat—

It seemed so shameful birds should sing  
To silence so divine a thing.

She faded, singing, from my sight,  
A dream of beauty and delight :

And I, with unconsenting will,  
Retraced my footsteps down the hill.

### CALIFORNIAN CRADLE SONG.

THERE are cumulus clouds on these purple  
hills,

The water runs in forgotten rills,  
Sedate nemophilas' eyes of blue

Demurely smile on the world anew,  
For the raindrops cease their murmur of  
peace,

And the fowls creep out,

And the children shout,  
And an oriole sings

Where a poppy springs,  
And the field is green,

And the sky serene,  
And the baby wonders, and cannot guess  
Why the world is clad in such loveliness.



O wise young mother whose notes prolong  
The dreamful tones of your tranquil song,  
O trustful babe at your mother's breast  
Remembering dimly a land more blest,  
Do you think it strange that the hillsides  
change?

That a flower renews

Its maidenly hues?

That an oriole sings

And a poppy springs?

I recall the grace

Of a lifted face,

And I see it again in this babe, and guess  
Why the world is renewed in such loveliness.

## THE BRIDE OF TAMALPAIS.

THE haughty crest of Tamalpais  
Is held communing with the skies;  
To kingly splendor was he born  
And ages has the purple worn.  
How eagerly the morning light  
Springs to caress his utmost hight;  
It scorns the vales that intervene,  
The long, low lands of San Joaquin,  
And bounds with passionate unrest  
From crag to peak, from peak to crest.

Through all the livelong summer's day  
The mountain lover guards the bay;  
The sunrise finds the sentinel  
Severe and stern by San Rafael,

The parting sunset leaves him there  
Defying all the powers of air ;  
For love is true, and love is grand,  
As deep as sea, as firm as land,  
And one may find his truest rest  
In guarding her he loves the best.

And all day long his bride, the bay,  
Is clad in lovely disarray ;  
And all day long she sits and croons  
Quaint melodies and strange love tunes.

Mountain lover,  
Monarch over  
All the land and all the sea,  
Hearts are aching,  
Hearts are breaking,  
For the love you give to me.

All my pride is  
That thy bride is  
Queen alone within thy breast;  
True and tender,  
Full of splendor,  
Mountain lover—loved the best!

Through all the trees that fringe the shore,  
Madroño, oak, and sycamore—  
Through pine and fir and tamarack,  
The glad breeze bears his answer back.

When the twilight  
Mourns the day,  
When the starlight  
On the bay—  
Silver starlight—falls aslant  
On the waters resonant,  
Then I bend  
To kiss my bride,  
Daughter of the peaceful tide.

She is loving,  
She is fair,  
Ever moving—  
Debonair;  
Like the starlight on the bay,  
Silver starlight on the spray,  
When I bend  
To kiss my bride,  
Daughter of the peaceful tide.

## YUMA.

WEARY, weary, desolate,  
Sand-swept, parched, and cursed of fate;  
Burning, but how passionless!  
Barren, bald, and pitiless!

Through all ages baleful moons  
Glared upon thy whited dunes;

And malignant, wrathful suns  
Fiercely drank thy streamless runs;

So that Nature's only tune  
Is the blare of the simoon  
Piercing burnt unweeping skies  
With its awful monodies.

Not a flower lifts its head  
Where the emigrant lies dead;

Not a living creature calls  
Where the Gila Monster crawls  
Hot and hideous as the sun  
To the dead man's skeleton;

But the desert and the dead,  
And the hot hell overhead,  
And the blazing, seething air,  
And the dread mirage are there.

## AT PASADENA.

To lie among my orange trees  
That bloom by far Los Angeles ;—  
To watch the lemon blossoms blow,  
    From out some fragrant, shaded spot  
Where, dreaming with Boccaccio,  
    The drowsy world is half forgot ;—  
To note some busy, garrulous bird  
    Planning within the dense lime hedge,  
Knowing her nest will be unstirred  
    By care's intruding sacrilege ;—  
To hear the far-off summer sea,  
    To scent the odorous southern breeze,  
To catch the murmuring minstrelsy  
    Of idly droning, gaudy bees ;—



To feel though heaven is very near  
That earth is fairer and more dear—  
Ah, this is life's supremest gift!

And gazing through the purple haze  
One reads this legend in some rift:  
God's poems are such perfect days.

## INSPIRATION.

ALONG the radiant hilltop flushes morn,  
The cañon, yet unwaked, frowns grim and  
dark ;

But, showering vocal ecstasies, the lark  
Is mounting madly skyward to the dawn.

The grizzly lies in heavy torpor yet,  
The panther sleeps in some convenient  
shade,

And, just this moment peering through  
the glade,

The deer has found the buckeye blossoms  
wet—

The lark alone full half an hour ago  
Thrilled from his slumber at the first  
faint glow.

So, only, O young Poet, shalt thou sing!  
Thy soul must lose its pride of strength  
and scorn,  
Must feel the hint of each diviner thing  
Before the torpid world beholds it dawn.

## MOUNT HAMILTON.<sup>1</sup>

MILES to the southward, looking down  
On fertile fields and on gardened town,

On orchards fragrant with almond blooms  
And pastures drowsy with wild perfumes,

A sentinel mountain stands alway,  
Guarding far, dream-like San José.

When men first climbed to its lifted crest  
And gazed with a rapture unexpressed,

<sup>1</sup> Read at a dinner given by The Berkeley Club to Rev.  
L. Hamilton, after whom the site of the Lick Observatory  
was named.

And found the pathway to God unbarred  
Through heavenly meadows, myriad-starred,

They sought for some name akin to light  
And gave to it his—our guest's to-night.

And when they endeavored in later years  
To spell the secrets of all the spheres,

To penetrate unsuspected skies  
And interpret their distant harmonies,

'Twas found that the most unsullied light  
Rested upon this amber hight.

Here, as the ages fly apace,  
Students will challenge the guards of space.

Here will be weighed each distant world ;  
Here will the universe be unfurled.

And in the impassioned hush of night  
Shall come the hint of diviner light,

And those who are searching for worlds  
alone  
In pathless track and in starless zone

As they stand on this mount in coming  
years  
Shall think of the one whose name it  
bears,

And then, like him, through the silver bars  
Shall see God standing behind the stars.

## AT THE SUMMIT.

NOT to the southern savanna  
That pants for the clasp of the sea,  
Nor yet to the peaks of Montana  
White-mitered in chastity—  
But here, O my fairer Sierra,  
I come like a child to thy breast,  
Confessing my heart's bitter error,  
Lamenting its burning unrest.

Here only, O marvelous mountains,  
Sublimely serene and unmoved,  
I drink a new faith from thy fountains  
And feel my forebodings unproved.  
The stars they are nearer and kinder,  
The air seems clearer to sight,

And worlds that await but the finder  
Are faint on the verge of the night.

Far down, unaware of this glory,  
The bruised earth lies at my feet—  
Shall I take them this balm salvatory?  
Will they know it is healing and sweet?  
Or will they pronounce this a vision,  
And me but a coiner of dreams  
Deserving their wiser derision,  
Their jests and significant gleams?

What matters how plodders shall take it!  
The grandeur of truth must be sung;  
And the sneering of fools shall not shake it  
Where once its accents have rung.  
And builder and singer and dreamer  
Shall dream and shall sing and shall  
build,  
For the world will forget the vain schemer  
When the mission of these is fulfilled.



TENAYA.

BEAUTIFUL Lake,

With silvery light

Sheening thy surface on moonlit night,

And granite floor as hard and cold

As palace hall of the days of old—

A fay is dwelling in every brake

That fringes thy shore,

O beautiful Lake.

Silvery Lake,

With rippling face,

Each mimic billow the line of grace,

Lapping the sympathetic shore,

And lisping some tale of mountain lore—

Telling of bird, or of water snake,

Mystical stories,

O silvery Lake.

## UNDER THE STARS.

THE day is not for thought, but deeds,  
And one who dreams at midday needs—  
He needs the throbbing pulse which acts,  
The will which changes dreams to facts;  
He needs to know both right and wrong,  
He needs to know men weak and strong;  
To learn to think with healthful mind,  
With creed as broad as human kind;  
He needs to feel that toil is great,  
The architect of every fate.

But day is only half our lives,  
And he half lives who always strives,  
Who takes no survey of the field,  
Who plants, but never plans the yield.

Go forth at night by peaceful seas,  
And catch their wondrous melodies ;  
Go forth and hear the tide of fate  
Which pulses through the Golden Gate,  
While far to seaward breaks the moan  
Of billows on sad Farallon.  
There yield thyself unto the spell,  
And let thy soul uplift and dwell  
Beneath the searching, silent stars  
That pierce like silver scimitars.  
Then in the unimpassioned night  
Thy soul shall feel diviner light,  
Shall sit entranced, as one who hears  
The surging anthem of the spheres.  
There dream of things of high estate,  
Of deathless deeds which make men great,  
Of burning words which flame like fire,  
And rouse a nation's deep desire,  
Of noble thoughts which glorify,  
Of fame and immortality.

O, it is grand to dream—to play  
With inspiration—disarray  
The mind so it may cleave the sea  
Of thought, with godlike poise, soul free!  
Like him who saw new worlds in space,  
Thy finer vision now shall trace  
A hint of higher mysteries,  
A glimpse of possibilities  
Which lie like undiscovered spheres  
Within diviner atmospheres.  
Thy mind shall hold a broader plan,  
Thy heart confess a truer man;  
And day, no more a weary round  
Of toiling hours, of jarring sound,  
Shall come to thee with new intent,  
Thy time of grand accomplishment.

• CRADLE SONG.

INTO the balm of the West-land,  
In with the birth of the day,  
A tiny soul, seeking the best land,  
Rode on a star-beam this way.  
The moon with its crescent bent over,  
The morning was fresh on the hill,  
The dew nestled down in the clover  
That warmed it with passionate thrill.  
The tiny soul came to the West-land,  
Came with the birth of the day,  
And whispered: "Ah! this is the best land;  
Here will I rest by the bay."

Long may the balm of the West-land,  
Long may the freshness of dawn,

Long may the soul of the best land

Breathe to her soul who is born.

Long may the crescent bend over,

Morning be sweet on the hill,

And dew, nestling down with its lover,

Warm with more passionate thrill.

For she who has come to this best land

Shall grow with the grace of the dawn ;

And peace that abides in this West-land

Shall be with the babe that is born.

## A DEAD RIVER.

I PLOWED in my fields in November,  
For the rain, like a dream, came at night,  
And lo! where none could remember,  
Deep buried and hidden from sight,  
I uncovered the bed of a river  
That once laughed like a maid in the sun  
Ere its heart-beats were silent forever  
And its musical life-stream had run.

I sit in my cheerless November,  
And the past, like a dream, comes at  
night,  
And lo! where none can remember,  
So deep is it hidden from sight,

I unburden my grief for a maiden .

Who once laughed, river-like, in the sun  
Ere her heart-beats were hushed in my

Aidenn

And her musical life-stream had run.



PALLAS.

I SAT at home, in easy chair,  
Near Pallas with her golden hair.

The mellow lamplight on her tress  
Trembled with untold tenderness.

Her eyes, with far-off, distant gaze,  
Were penetrating future days.

"Reveal," quoth I, "what vision lies  
Within the dreams you catechise?"

What wondrous land of love and song  
Has tranced my dreaming bride so long?"

She slowly turned her graceful head,  
That Phidias might have carved, and said:

"I had a foolish, passing thought—  
A vain regret the moment brought.

Our quiet lives have no great needs;  
Our kindly friends do no great deeds;

I do not care to walk where kings  
Receive the homage power brings,

But long to know those few of earth  
Within whose minds grand thoughts have  
birth;

To breathe with them an ampler air,  
To feel with them a nobler care.

But we are chained by circumstance;  
We stand, but seem not to advance."

I pointed where the open door  
Showed shelves well stocked with motley  
lore :

“There is the company you seek,  
The ancient Roman and the Greek ;

There, by the sunny southern wall,  
The blind old Homer waits your call ;

Imperial Cæsar bows most low  
Beside the courtly Cicero ;

There stands the king of bards sublime,  
‘Not for an age, but for all time’ ;

Rare Jonson, side by side with Poe,  
And Hawthorne chatting with De Foe ;

There Humboldt, erst inspired of God,  
Now learns what wilds our Stanley trod ;

While Newton bows his mighty head  
To catch the last word Tyndall said ;

The monarchs of the ages these—  
One perfect line from Socrates !

The old world and the new one, too,  
Are waiting on those shelves for you."

She spoke intensely then : " A man  
Must find his learning where he can ;

A woman, in her slightest looks,  
Sees what is written not in books ;

And I would rather learn to know  
By keenly watching one great brow

When inspiration flashed its light  
Like some great meteor in the night,

Than sit, and plod, like common clay,  
On what the master cast away."

She rose, and passed from out the room,  
Which straightway seemed inwrapped in  
gloom.

Ere long I heard her rich voice rise,  
Breathing angelic melodies.

She sang, with sympathetic tone,  
The notes divine of Mendelssohn.

I stole to where the door, ajar,  
Revealed her like a glorious star.

I knew she felt within her heart  
Impassioned longings after art.

As, mute, I stood to hear her sing,  
She was to me a holy thing;

And, as I gazed, I breathed a prayer  
And benediction on her there.

### SPELL-BOUND.

O MAIDEN of the starry eyes,  
Thy beauty chains my wonderment;  
Thou art the fairest star to rise  
Within the boundless firmament.  
The day is grand,  
The night is fair,  
But thou alone art past compare.

O maiden of the starry eyes,  
I gaze afar with raptured face;  
I cannot speak my sweet surprise,  
Nor tell thine unimagined grace.  
A thing divine  
To me thou art,  
Some angel's fairer counterpart.

## THE SANGREAL.

FROM out the twilight and the past,  
From out the golden gloaming time,  
A legend comes, with measures cast  
In antique verse and wondrous rhyme.

It tells how Launcelot and Gawain,  
And all King Arthur's knightly band,  
Pursued the holy cup in vain  
As far as shining Samarcand.

They sought by many a midnight watch,  
And under many a midday sun ;  
They toiled through many a weary march,  
And many a splendid deed was done.



But many seek and few shall find,  
And fruit comes not from flower impaired,  
Nor holy cup to impure mind,  
Nor prize except to Galahad.

But when a noble act was done  
The trembling air was glorified  
With music of a sphere unknown,  
Like song from some far river side.

There is a hidden, secret sense  
Within this song the poet sings—  
A hint of life's great recompense  
Within his vague imaginings.

For what is toil and what is strife  
To brave Sir Launcelot or Gawain?  
Shall one hold his a wasted life  
Who seeks the prize of life in vain?

No! Count not any toil as naught,  
Nor any blow against the wrong,  
For noble deeds have always wrought  
Their record into deathless song.

Though one be not Sir Galahad,  
And all one's strivings lack success,  
Great actions are their own reward  
And life is not fruitionless.

And one who toils where toil is grand  
May find no cup to soothe his care;  
But peace, like floating saraband,  
Shall breathe through all the sentient air.

### UNATTAINED.

If I could catch one note of song  
From out the melody that streams  
In throbbing currents through my dreams,  
The world would cease its strife and wrong,  
And bend to hear with eager ear,  
And swear such music were divine—  
That single note of mine!

If I could write one burning word  
Like those I dream, but cannot speak,  
Mankind would cease to plot, and seek  
To cleanse the page that now is blurred,  
And understand that life is grand  
If, only, life be grandly spent  
In great accomplishment.

If I could once most faintly sketch  
What fancy's facile pencil draws,  
All men would wonder at the cause  
Why I might so divinely etch;  
But, though I try, nor paint can I,  
Nor sing one song, nor voice one thought,  
With which my dreams are fraught.

Far better to be blind than dumb  
If all this glory lie unfurled,  
And I alone of all the world  
Who might translate it now be numb,  
Nor speak one word man might have heard  
Whose meaning and majestic rhyme  
Should echo through all time.

## AT THE BRIDGE.

AND here is Death!

The river surges on, and smiles, and beck-  
ons me.

How sweet it were to play with its white  
foam,

To lie beneath its dancing wave, and ever-  
more

To listen to the inspiration of its voice!

How calmly restful to the aching heart!

How free

From disappointments wearisome might one  
repose,

And let the current bear his cares away,  
while he sleeps on,

And ever on, and hears no sound except  
the murmuring stream  
Which bids him ever sleep.

But there is Life!

And Life, too, surges on, and smiles, and  
beckons me.

There honor, glory, love are won—and high  
emprise

Awaits its master mind. The current that  
bears on one's cares

Will bear him, too, nor leave him, prone,  
to sleep away

A grand Eternity. Its music is no monotone  
That croons away the sense, for all its clar-  
ion strains

Impel to action; and, if e'er one sink to  
rest,

It is to dream of greater deeds, and when  
he wakes,

To make those deeds his own.

## LOVE IN A COTTAGE.

I EXPLAINED my exact situation,  
I told her my clients were few,  
That life would be full of privation  
And want, at the best we could do.

She said we would live in a cottage,  
And love should abide with us there;  
We would dine on a *menu* of pottage,  
And breakfast and lunch upon air.

She knew how to make a home pretty,  
And how to economize, too;  
And she grew sarcastic and witty  
Over "splurge" and wasteful ado.

No carpets, for instance, were needed,  
The floors should be inlaid and bare ;  
And Persian rugs rarely exceeded  
Some six hundred dollars a pair.

Then doors, with their creakings and bang-  
ings,  
We would have none of *them* in this  
place ;  
She would much prefer elegant hangings—  
An occasional arras of lace.

I gazed at the ceiling above me,  
And my face wore a look of dismay ;  
She sobbed : " You ~~surely don't love me,~~  
Or you never would look in that way."



